

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabile.org.

Date: First Sunday of Lent - February 21, 2010

Title: “Why the Rebel Must Die”

Text: Matthew 16:13-28

Theme: Our rebellion against God demands that we die. The insurrection must be put down. It is only through death that life will come. The Gospel speaks to this.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in the Storyline of the Bible. She is determined by design to have a God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching focused on personal discipleship through intentional and systematic instruction; a Global-impacting mission that resolves to be a church planting church; and a Grace-based fellowship where disciples are invited to live under a reigning grace characterized by a Gospel-driven sanctification that celebrates a divine monergism to the Christian life.

Reflecting on His Work and the Storyline of the Bible

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Introduction:

On Wednesday the Western Church began Lent by marking Ash Wednesday. I would like to lead with a note of clarification. Over the last several years I have intentionally gone about seeking to educate myself and us as to the liturgical calendar and what the Story looks like as it relates to Advent, Lent, and Pentecost. If you truly desire to understand what I believe Lent can do for us collectively, I would encourage you to read everything I have written about Lent and the Story of God over the last several years.

If you were to search the word Lent on the internet you would find the idea of denial, sacrifice and repentance with the intent of meriting or earning divine favor/blessing. Let me make this clear; I do not see Lent as a time of denial, sacrifice or repentance FOR THE PURPOSE OF MERITING FAVOR OR BLESSING. There is nothing meritorious or wage structured in our relationship with God. It is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone from start to finish. We are to look to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. Thus, regardless as to any who look at justification and sanctification as synergistic (i.e. “the work of two”), I am cutting a different path and emphasizing a different purpose for this Ecclesiastical Season.

I personally find Lent a time of remembering, returning and reconnecting. I believe the local church is a place where this can take place. It is a time where we remember the Story and return to our Christian roots. When I speak of my “Christian roots” I speak to those **initial and inaugural elements** that make up the life we now have **in Christ**. I believe we will see this in the message of John, Jesus, Peter and Paul.

Let us begin with John. John tells a nation to “repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.” (Matt. 2:1-3)

1 “Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ²**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** ³For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, ‘THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, **MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!**’” (Matt. 2:1-3).

Why, why does John tell his audience to “repent, make ready, and make straight?” What is their underlying condition that would require such actions? As John’s ministry was entering into its twilight, our Lord’s ministry was just beginning to dawn. His proclamation was in keeping with John’s.

³² “Therefore everyone who **confesses** Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever **denies** Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. ³⁴ Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a **sword**. ³⁵ For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER **AGAINST** HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; ³⁶ and A MAN'S **ENEMIES** WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. ³⁷ **He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me**; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ **And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me**. ³⁹ **He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it**” (Matt. 10:32-39).

There is severity to the extended invitation. Listen to how Jesus strikes this same chord in Matthew 16.

²⁴ “Then Jesus said to His disciples, **‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.** ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save **his life will lose it**; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. ²⁸ Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Matt. 16:24-28).

Why the severity? Why the call to die, to take up one’s cross and live a life of denial? Why must I come to life through death? **Why must the rebel die?**

Peter continues this same refrain in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37, 28).

³⁷ “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, **‘Brethren, what shall we do?’** ³⁸ Peter said to them, **‘Repent,** and each of you be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37, 38).

In the words of William Willimon, “His message is not the simple one of the Baptist, ‘Be clean.’ Jesus’ word is more painful – ‘Be killed.’ The chief biblical analogy for baptism is not the water that washes but the flood that drowns.”¹ Peter speaks to this.

Paul captures the essence of this same invitation and speaks of confessing Jesus as Lord.

⁸ “But what does it say? ‘THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart’ - -that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth **Jesus as Lord**, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Rom. 10:8-10).

This **Lordship** for Paul is placed in the context of Roman rule. It speaks of regal, kingship and monarchical status. Jesus Christ is King and His kingship is in opposition to any and all other usurpers. His dominion levels all others. No one and nothing compares or competes. When Paul invites us to “confess and believe” **his appeal is to pledge allegiance and uncompromising loyalty**. The means to this end is through the pathway laid before us by John, Jesus, and Peter — death. Why, **why must the rebel die?**

There is a reason why each of these messengers speak of repentance and death, baptism and the cross, denial and discipleship. As stark as this initial thought is we must fully understand **why the rebel must die**. This is the precursor to the Storyline. Something happen that demanded blood atonement. When considering the incarnation of God and His untimely, humiliating and barbaric death, our minds must be searched. What crime, we might ask, is so insulting as to warrant an incarnation and then the death of the incarnated? Although we might struggle to process the idea on a purely human level where it is a tit for tat, how can we fathom the immeasurable depth of the Creator becoming what He created so that He might redeem the rebel?

In our initial study the answer is not forthcoming. Here we will not probe the mystery as to why God became man, yet why the rebel must die is evident. There is no rebuttal or negation. The topic has more verification than can be treated in any one lifetime. We will, however, consider five short thoughts with the intent of answering the question, “**Why must the rebel die?**”

The Synod of Dordt (1618) - Article 1: God's Right to Condemn All People

Since all people have sinned in Adam and have come under the sentence of the curse and eternal death, God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the entire human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn them on account of their sin. As the apostle says: The whole world is liable to the condemnation of God (Rom. 3:19), All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).²

THE BIG PICTURE:

1. Why the rebel must die.
2. Why the provision must die.
3. Why the rebel must come.
4. Why the Church must gather.
5. Why the reckoning must continue.
6. Why the King must come.
7. Why the Master must serve.
8. Why the Lamb must die.
9. Why the Church is Silent.
10. Why the Church must rejoice.

The Storyline:

We must place the narrative into the larger storyline of the Bible. The Bible speaks of two Adams. The first is seen in our current passage and the second will be in the Messiah Jesus. In the first there is a temptation and transgression and in the second there is equally temptation. Yet where the first failed, the second Adam will succeed. The first Adam is the federal head of the entire race and the second Adam is similarly the federal head of His people. God wrote such pictures into His Story so that we might grasp the enormity and grandeur of His theme -- a theme of creation, transgression, condemnation and redemption/re-creation. It is only as we understand the Bible as Story that such narratives as singular ideas have meaning and cohesiveness. There is "light" at the end of the tunnel and it is hope and redemption. Yet to get from where we are to where we need to be we must pass through the dark tunnel of rebellion and death.

The Problem:

There is no innate goodness within man. Although we are created in His image and likeness, we are bent away from God and seek our own autonomy.

If the fall of man were to have occurred in our times, one can hardly conceive of the consequences. I would imagine that the American Civil Liberties Union would immediately file suit—against God and in defense of Eve and her husband (the order of the two is not accidental), Adam. The suit would probably be pressed on the grounds of an illegal eviction. "And after all," we would be told, "this alleged sinful act was performed in the privacy of the garden, and by two consenting adults." But most of all we would be told that the crime (if indeed there was one) and the punishment were totally out of proportion. Could God really be serious in what this account claims to report? Because of a mere bite of some 'forbidden fruit' the man and woman are evicted and will suffer a lifetime of consequence? And more than this, that due to this one act the whole world and all mankind continue to suffer the evils about us?³

Questions:

1. Does our rebellion against God demand that we die?
2. Must the insurrection be put down?
3. Does any activity on my part merit the favor of God?
4. How can the Lenten Season be used profitably in the life of the Christian?
5. Why does John say "repent"? What does this action presuppose?
6. Why does Jesus say "die"? What does this action demand?
7. Why does Peter use the imagery of baptism to communicate entrance into the "Christian" life?
8. What does Paul mean when he says we must confess "Jesus as Lord"?
9. What does the Lordship of Christ represent?
10. From the Storyline of the Bible please explain the idea of "two Adams".
11. What five reasons are offered as to why the rebel must die?
12. Where do you see yourself?
13. Does God make new the old or does He kill the old?
14. Does sin intrinsically merit or carry demerit?
15. How might we misunderstand the Gospel and what is meant by "newness of life"?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know why the rebel must die.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose to accept the rebel's demise.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of embracing the rebel's death.

Outline:

I would like to consider five evidences from the Book of Genesis which speak to question, "**Why the rebel must die?**"

I. **The rebel must die** because he transgressed God's Word (Gen. 2:16, 17).

It is difficult for us to process perfection, yet Adam and Eve were perfect and lived in perfection. They had everything we only hunt after and hope for. Good health, plenty to eat and enjoy, unhindered communion with one another and with God. They had all the freedom and liberty anyone would or could want or ask for, yet within the abundant yes there sat a single, solitary no.

¹⁶ "The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ **but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die'" (Gen. 2:16, 17).

For sin to take on the nature of an eternal transgression there must be an immutable and absolute means of measurement. The command or prohibition of God not to eat created a law whereby a breaking could happen. This breaking of law would become a transgression (Rom. 4:15; 5:14). Although the negative is noted, there were several notable commands given that could have just as easily been "transgressed" and brought ruin to the individual.

With all that they had and could have continued to have, mankind rejected the open hand of God and invited His displeasure and justice. **Their transgression demands that the rebel die.**

II. **The rebel must die** because he runs from God (Gen. 3:8, 10).

The word "hid" is used in Genesis 31:27 for when Jacob "fled secretly" from Laban. It is used of when Rahab "hid the messengers" in Jericho (Josh. 6:17, 25). It is used of hiding in a cave from one's enemies (Josh. 10:16, 17, 27). It is used of Jotham son of Gideon hiding from his killer Abimelech (Judges 9:5). It is used of Saul hiding himself from being discovered (1 Sam. 10:22). Thus it is used throughout the Old Testament Story.

Adam and Eve hid from God as if He were their enemy and out to destroy them. This is the tone and panic and fervency contained in their action of hiding.

This same idea is captured by Paul in Romans 3:11, "THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD."

Although we have woven into our makeup a divine “itch” we refuse to find our “scratch” in God. We seek every other option before we seek God. In fact even though He is our only hope, we run and hide.

“Shame, remorse, fear--a sense of guilt--feelings to which they had hitherto been strangers disordered their minds and led them to shun Him whose approach they used to welcome.”⁴

Remember the Jonah narrative? Jonah heard the call of God and sought to run from His presence.

³ “But **Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD**. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. . . ¹⁰ Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, "How could you do this?" **For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them**” (Jonah 1:3, 10).

Oh how brazen Jonah was in his sin. This is the natural man in their open rebellion against God. Oh how calloused and indifferent are those who live in bondage to their sin nature. **It is because of this aggressive rejection of God that the rebel must die.**

III. **The rebel must die** because he blames God (Gen. 3:11, 12).

Do we not recoil from such blatant irresponsibility? Is not our response the same when those who are fully caught refuse to accept responsibility but in return blame you for their moral failure?

“His wickedness and lack of true repentance appears in this that he blamed God because he had given him a wife.” (1599 Geneva Bible on Genesis 3:12). Until there is personal ownership and culpability there can be no confession, repentance and forgiveness. This is what is prescriptive as it relates to our initial encounter with God.

“See here what is commonly the folly of those who have sinned; **they have more care to save their credit before men, than to obtain their pardon from God.**” (Matthew Henry on Genesis 3:12).

Is this not the principle referenced by James in James 1:13?

¹³ “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; **for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.** ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.”

No matter how the circumstances play out, you are fully and finally culpable before God for your sin. Until you own up and accept your culpability and responsibility for your sin, you will never find life. **It is because of personal irresponsibility that the rebel must die.**

IV. **The rebel must die** because he is only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).

“All the imaginations of their thoughts were evil—the **very first embryo of every idea**, the figment of every thought, the very materials out of which perception, conception, and ideas were formed, were all evil; the fountain which produced them, with every thought, purpose, wish, desire, and motive, was **incurably poisoned**.” (Adam Clarke on Genesis 6:5)

After the flood Noah offers a blood sacrifice and here is the divine commentary.

“The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, **for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth**; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done” (Gen. 8:21).

“The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9).

The only way for the heart of man to be made new is for the old to die. God does not redeem the old heart/nature; He kills the old nature and grants a new heart/nature. There is something intrinsic to the individual that will require blood atonement. The sin of the human heart is systemic. It is so intertwined within the soul of the individual as to form one’s identity and unless and until this dies, there can be no life. **It is because of essential sin that the rebel must die**.

V. **The rebel must die** because he receives the wages of his sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23; James 1:14, 15).

“but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, **for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die**” (Gen. 2:17).

“Therefore, **just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned**” (Rom. 5:12).

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

¹⁴ “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and **when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death**” (James 1:14, 15).

The word “wage” used in Romans 6:23 is used of payment for services rendered (Lu 3:14; 1Co 9:7; 2Co 11:8). James uses the imagery of conception, pregnancy and birthing. **“The sin at birth is fully equipped for its career.”** (A.T. Robertson on James 1:14, 15)

“Evil works merit the reward they receive: good works do not. The former demand wages: the latter accept a free gift.” (John Wesley’s Notes on Romans 6:23).

“The pleasure and profit of sin do not deserve to be called fruit. Sinners are but **ploughing iniquity, sowing vanity, and reaping the same.** Shame came into the world with sin, and is still the certain effect of it. The end of sin is death. Though the way may seem pleasant and inviting, yet it will be bitterness in the latter end.” (Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on Romans 6:23).

Sin intrinsically carries demerit. It has a wage and it faithfully pays its dues. Sin will create an eternal severance from God. It will impact all immediate relationships. **Untreated it will damn souls to an eternal separation from all that is God and fall under His benevolent radiance.**

All human beings come into the world thinking that **they are the center of the universe** and that no boundaries really apply to them. **At its most fundamental level, this is the nature of sin. It is the human tendency to be autonomous, responsible to no one but self and serving no ends but self-satisfaction.** In this sense, it is "original," because it lies at the very heart of who we are as human beings. While the story portrayed sin in terms of crossing God’s boundaries, it should not be seen solely in legal categories as a violation of external law. Ultimately, for the first pair sin unfolded in disrupted *relationships* resulting from **their self-serving exercise of autonomy in God’s world, a world in which they could not be gods.**⁵

There is severity in the sentence against us and the invitation extended. Its severity comes as a result of our complacency and forgetfulness. What we must remember and never forget is that we came to God as rebels who led and are a part of an unholy insurrection. We claim no allegiance to anyone but our own angry selves. We are the offspring of an evil alliance. It is for this reason, **“The rebel must die.”** Yet from this crucible of “barrenness” comes birth, new birth to be exact. Resolution of our sin debt happens when we embrace and affirm God’s right to rule us. There is clarity in the simplicity and severity of the note sounded. **We must die.** It is the only natural outcome of our rebellion against God. In the death of Christ, death dies. We must either accept His death in our behalf or we will die a second death. It is for this reason we must pass through the “valley of the shadow of death” in order that we might be brought forth in newness of life. **We must die.**

We must die and we are already dead. It is exchanging the death of one thing for that of another. From one comes separation and in the other, life.

The confusing thing for us is a misunderstanding of the gospel. Our thinking has become diluted and muddled as it relates to what biblical faith and its resultant fruit looks like. There is death, burial and resurrection. Paul speaks of those who have died with Christ who are now walking in newness of life (Rom. 6). This promising and hope-filled resurrection and newness of life is not the resurrection of our life, but His, and we are in Him. It is the Christ-life and NOT the “me” or my-life. This resurrection resulting from repentance is not the

“ultimate make-over”. We are not “made over”. We are killed, destroyed, and annihilated and a new life is resurrected in its place. **The old house is not remodeled; it is removed.** The message of Matthew 16:24-26 is clear.

Listen how carefully Matthew Henry states this proposition.

“Let us acknowledge God's right to rule us, and our own obligations to be ruled by him; and never allow any will of our own in contradiction to, or competition with, the holy will of God.”⁶

Maybe there are some who have never yet come the way of the cross. You have never entered into life, His life. Please do not misunderstand. You only come once, but once entered you never forget that pivotal moment or journey when your senses were opened and you saw, heard and felt Christ. Regardless as to whether you are new to this thinking or a seasoned veteran, Lent invites you to remember and return. It bids you to close the gap created by distance. It makes possible for us to reconnect with our past and hopefully bring clarity to our present. As we consider the Lenten season in preparation for the picturing of the Gospel during Passion Week, let us not fear but let us turn ourselves toward God with boldness and confidence, and invite the Holy Spirit to purge from us the encumbering weights and the sin that has so easily beset us and let us renew our pursuit of Him with persistent patience as we look to Jesus who is both the author and the finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:1, 2).

Shepherding the Sheep: (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Do you recognize that you deserve to be eternally separated from God and that there is nothing you can do to correct the problem? There is no excuse or dismissing the charge.
2. There is nothing and no one to whom you can compare yourself against to lessen the guilt.
3. The Holy Spirit invites you to remember your death into life. He calls you to return to your Christian roots and to reconnect with what is truly important and first.
4. May God drive this truth home into our hearts and minds and may we never leave His Story.

¹ (William Willimon, “Repent,” in *Bread and Wine: Readings for Lent and Easter* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003], 8, 9).

² http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/canons_of_dordt.html

³ <http://bible.org/seriespage/fall-man-genesis-31-24>

⁴ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamieson-fausset-brown/genesis/genesis-3.html>

⁵ <http://www.cresourcei.org/gen3.html> (emphasis added) Dennis Bratcher, “The ‘Fall’ - A Second Look: A Literary Analysis of Genesis 2:4-3:24,” An edited form of this essay was first published in *Biblical Resources for Holiness Preaching: From Text to Sermon*, vol. 2, edited by H. Ray Dunning, Beacon Hill Press, 1993, pp. 317-332.

⁶ *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* Genesis 2:16.